BRITISH COLUMBIA

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highlights

a weekly digest of recently released British Columbia statistics

Labour Force

- **British Columbia's unemployment rate fell by 0.3 percentage points to 9.1% in July.** For the second consecutive month, BC's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate declined 0.3 percentage points reversing the upward trend which occurred in the earlier part of this year. The number of people employed increased 0.2% from the previous month.

  Nationally, the unemployment rate (8.4%) remained unchanged for the fourth consecutive month. An increase in the number of jobs (0.2%) was offset by the increase in the number of persons who wanted a job.

  All of the western provinces saw either an improvement or no change in their unemployment rate in July. Manitoba showed the greatest decline—0.4 percentage points to 5.3, the lowest unemployment rate in Canada.

  Source: Statistics Canada

Construction

- **The value of building permits issued by municipalities in BC increased 5.3% in June to $242 million.** This was a rebound from the seasonally adjusted May figure, but was down 3.9% from the first quarter of this year. Non-residential building permits reached $174.2 million—the highest value this year, up 14.9% from the previous month. The industrial sector made the greatest gains in June with values reaching $29.7 million.

  Nationally, the total value of building permits increased 1.4% from the previous month to $2.7 billion. Increases in both residential (0.6%) to $1.4 billion and non-residential (2.3%) to $1.3 billion were recorded in June.

  Source: Statistics Canada

Tourism

- **Passenger arrivals and departures at Victoria International airport were up 11.4% year-to-date for June.** A total of 574,199 passengers traveled through the airport in the first half of 1998. In addition to increased airline traffic, Victoria hotels also registered increases in occupancy rates. In June, the hotel occupancy rate was 80.4%, with year-to-date occupancy rising to 67.5% from 66.3% in 1997. *Source: Hospitality Monitor, Grant Thornton*

- **Year-to-date passenger arrivals and departures into the Nanaimo airport were up 12.9% in June from the previous year.** There were 62,098 passengers that traveled through the airport in the first half of 1998. The occupancy rate for Nanaimo in June was 61.3%, a decline from the previous month rate of 63.5%. Year-to-date the occupancy rate in Nanaimo was slightly lower than the previous year, 57.0% compared to 57.8%.

- **The Visitor Info Centre in Victoria was Canada's busiest, with upwards of 800,000 annual requests made from visitors and residents.** The role of the Visitor Centre is to promote overnight stays and activities that will lengthen visitor stays and increase return visits. Since 1985, the focus has changed to provide accommodation bookings, ticket sales for transportation, theatre performances, and attractions. *Source: Hospitality Monitor, Grant Thornton*

Report **New Look: Tourism Room Revenue**

Did you know...?

That blood alcohol content levels as low as 20mg affects driving ability. The probability of a crash begins to increase significantly at 50 mg and climbs rapidly after about 80 mg.

Workers' Compensation

- **The number of claims reported to Workers' Compensation Board in 1997 was 185,852, a 1.9% decrease from 1996.** In BC, short-term disability claims made up 47% of total claims with a cost of $362 million dollars. Long-term claims made up 45% with a cost of $344 million. The total claims in 1997 reached $761 million.

  Since 1988, work reported injuries have declined from 192,515, to 185,852 by 1997. Back strains made up one quarter of the short-term disability claims in 1997. This figure has remained relatively constant over a decade. By gender, men account for 74% of the total claims. *Source: Workers' Compensation Board*

Culture

- **British Columbians spend more on books than newspapers.** Book lovers, representing 57% of households, spent an average $164 on books in 1996. The 62% of households that received newspapers spent, on average $128.

  Nationally, the big spenders on newspapers ($329) also tended to subscribe to cablevision, spending almost $400. Subscribers to newspapers were above average spenders on movies ($127) and live performances ($238).

  Source: Statistics Canada

Drinking and Driving

- **Impaired driving charges have declined by over a half in a decade.** Nationally, the rate of persons charged (per 100,000) dropped from 634 in 1986 to 335 in 1996. A small minority of hard core drunk drivers are responsible for the most serious offence—fatalities. In 1996, a total of 133 persons were charged with impaired driving for causing a death, a number that has stayed relatively constant since 1990.

  Less than 1% of those behind the wheel on weekends are hard-core drinking drivers—their chances of being involved in a serious collision are a hundred times greater than for other drivers. The recidivism rate (the rate at which an offence is repeated) for impaired driving in Canada is estimated at 20% to 45%.

  Although public opinion generally associates drunk drivers with teens, in fact those aged between 20 and 44 account for 74% of all impaired driving charges. In contrast, the 16 to 19 age group represents only 5% of those charged.

  The chances of receiving a guilty verdict for impaired driving offences in criminal courts are 80%. The most common sentence (66%) of those found guilty was payment of a fine along with the loss of their driver's license. Twenty-two percent of persons found guilty went to prison, and 9% were put on probation.

  Source: Statistics Canada

Second-Hand Smoke

- In 1995, 4.5 million non-smoking Canadians aged 15 and over were exposed to cigarette smoke on a daily basis. Teenage non-smokers are the most likely age group to be exposed to second-hand smoke. The home is the second most common location of second hand smoke for this age group.

  Roughly one in five adults lived with a smoker in 1995, but only 11% reported daily encounters with second hand smoke as smoking was not present every day. Twenty-two percent of non-smoking teenagers, and 37% of children, were exposed to a least one parent who smoked daily. *Source: Statistics Canada*

highlights, Issue 98-31
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For data originating from Statistics Canada: data sourced to 'Statistics Canada' has been retrieved from CANSIM, the agency's electronic database; otherwise the source is identified as 'SC' plus the publication name or catalogue number.

BC STATS
Ministry of Finance and Corporate Relations

Contact: Kevin Perrault
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Tourism Room Revenue ◆ April 1998

Highlights

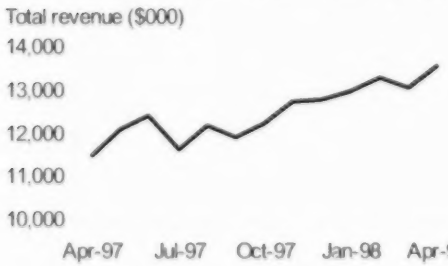
The Province

- Room revenue in British Columbia declined 2.1% to $95.5 million in April. This marked the third consecutive monthly decrease.

In the Regions

- While Northeast (-14.2%) and North Coast (-3.2%) experienced the largest percentage decreases in revenue from March, Mainland/Southwest (-1.2%) recorded the largest total revenue drop ($52.3 to $51.6 million). Vancouver Island/Coast (-0.3%) experienced a slight decline in April, after three months of positive growth.
- Nechako led the regions with strong revenue growth of 11.0% (to $931 thousand). This marked the first revenue increase for the region since December 1997. Thompson/Okanagan (+3.9%) rebounded from a March decline. Revenue for the region has increased in six of the last seven months.

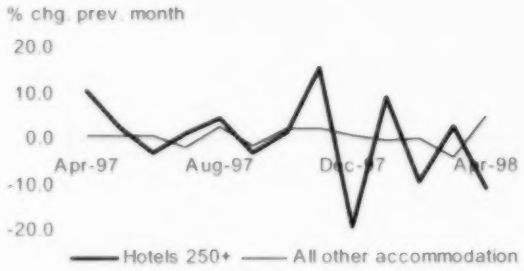
Thompson/Okanagan revenue rising



The Accommodation Types

- Lower room revenue in the largest hotels accounted for the April revenue decline. Hotels with 250 or more rooms decreased 11.0% (from $29.4 to $26.2 million), the third revenue drop in the last five months. In contrast, revenue for all other accommodation types combined increased 5.0% in April.

Large hotels slow April BC room revenue



Text Table 1. Room Revenue Summary

Accommodation Type	Apr. 98 ($000)	Mar. 98 ($000)	% change
Total	95,546	97,597	-2.1
Hotels	68,788	69,830	-1.5
Motels	14,355	14,020	2.4
Other Acc.	12,314	11,548	6.6
Regions (Top 3)			
Nechako	931	839	11.0
Thompson/Okanagan	13,586	13,076	3.9
Vancouver Island/Coast	18,236	18,296	-0.3

All data reported in Highlights are seasonally adjusted. All comparisons are to the month previous except where noted.

Room Revenue Trends

British Columbia unadjusted room revenue decreased to $74.6 million in April, down 0.7% compared to April 1997. Total revenue for the first four months of 1998 was 4.9% higher than the same period last year.

Spring growth in Thompson/Okanagan

Room revenue in Thompson/Okanagan was up 23.3% (to $9.4 million) in April. Year-over-year monthly revenue has increased in the region in each of the last twelve months. Thompson-Nicola (+43.7%), and Okanagan-Similkameen (+30.5%) Regional Districts, recorded the largest growth in April. Much of the revenue advances in the area can be attributed to above average spring weather and an extended ski season that included the April Easter weekend.

As hosts of the 1998 World Curling Championships, the City of Kamloops room revenue jumped dramatically in April (+56.3%). In addition, the City of Penticton (+30.7%) played host to the BC Parks & Recreation conference, drawing delegates from across BC & Canada. As a result, room occupancy rates in Kamloops (+9.8 percentage points) and Penticton (+11.4 percentage points) advanced in April compared to April last year.

Kootenay revenue rising

Kootenay revenue increased for the fourth consecutive month, growing 16.7% in April. The region has benefited significantly from the rise in American and Albertan visitors. Kootenay has recorded double-digit year-over-year growth in six of the last 12 months, and only one monthly decline (December 1997) since last April.

Events in April this year that may have attracted additional visitors included the BC Secondary Schools Music Festival in Nelson, the Kimberley Ski Resort Spring Splash, and the Nakusp Choral Festival.

*All references in **Room Revenue Trends** are to unadjusted data. All comparisons for **BC Tourism Indicators** are for the reference month relative to the same month the previous year.*

Text Table 2. BC Tourism Indicators

	Change from Apr. 97	Total Apr. 98
Hotel Industry		
Occupancy rate	-4.1 pp.	62.2%
Average room charge	3.9%	$95.63
(Pannell Kerr Forster)		
Passenger Traffic	**(%)**	**(000s)**
Vancouver International Airport		
Total traffic	4.5	1135.8
US	10.6	293.6
Other International	5.0	233
Canada	1.7	609.2
(YVR)		
Victoria International Airport		
Total traffic	17.3	101
(Victoria Airport Authority)		
Transportation	**(%)**	**(000s)**
Coquihalla Highway		
Passenger Vehicles	23.0	190.5
(Ministry of Transportation & Highways)		
BC Ferries		
Vehicle Volume	1.9	631
Passenger Volume	5.7	1,658
(BC Ferries)		
Exchange Rates	**chg. Mar. 98**	**Apr. Cdn $**
US $	0.014	1.430
UK Pound	0.037	2.392
Japanese Yen	0.000	0.011
Australian $	-0.016	0.933
(Statistics Canada)		

- Average room charges in BC were up $3.60 (to $95.63) in April compared to April last year. BC occupancy rate declined 4.1 percentage points (to 62.2%). The highest occupancy rate recorded in the province was in Greater Victoria (76.1%).
- While conference delegate days were down at the Vancouver Trade & Convention Centre (-18.4%) and Victoria Conference Centre (-3.2%), the Whistler Conference Centre (+32.8%) and Penticton Trade & Convention Centre (+577.5%) were up in April compared to April 1997.

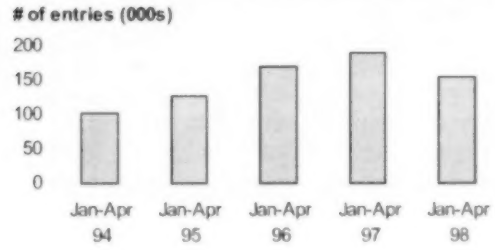
Traveller Entries to BC

- International traveller entries to Canada via BC grew 9.1% in April. Of the 492 thousand international entries, four in ten were American residents who stayed at least one night.

Overseas entries decline

- April entries from overseas were 80,753, down 6.5% from April 1997. The decrease was almost entirely accounted for by the 16.6% drop in entries by Asian residents. Entries by residents of Europe (1.3%) and Oceania (7.6%) advanced.
- Asian visitor entries to BC increased dramatically between 1994 and 1996. This trend continued until June 1997, when entries began to fall. However, 1997 was still a record year for Asian traveller entries to BC.

Asian visitor entries down but still above 1995



Although the 1998 level of Asian visitors has tapered off from that achieved in 96 and 97, total Asian entries are still higher than those observed in 1995.

- Entries by Japanese (+4.2%) and Hong Kong (+3.3%) residents were up in April compared to last year. Offsetting this, however, was a substantial decrease in visitors from Taiwan (-15.9%), South Korea (-62.5%) and other Asian countries (-39.5%).

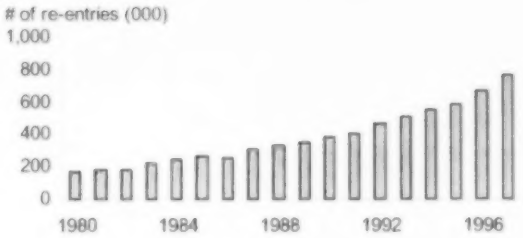
American visitors advance

- There were more American overnight visitors in April this year than last year. US overnight entries to BC jumped 14.5% to 196,247 in April. This represented 48% of all visitor entries to BC by Americans in April.

More Canadians abroad

- Canadians made fewer trips to the US (-15.4%) but more trips overseas (2.0%) in April. The number of Canadians who return to Canada via BC from travel overseas has been increasing steadily since 1986.

Canadian re-entries from overseas



Text Table 3. Traveller Entries

		% chg from Apr 97	Apr 98 (000)
American visitors			
Total		12.8	411
	Same-day	11.2	215
	Overnight	14.5	196
Overseas visitors			
Total		-6.5	81
Europe		1.3	22
	UK	19.9	11
Asia		-15.6	47
	Hong Kong	3.3	8
	Japan	4.2	22
Oceania		7.6	7
Canadian re-entries			
Total		-14.4	973
	From overseas	2.0	67
	From US	-15.4	906
	Same-day	-18.0	665

(Statistics Canada)

Note: All comparisons for Traveller Entries to BC are for the reference month relative to the same month the previous year.

SPECIAL FOCUS: *Tourism Room Revenue* (TRR) report changes

In today's global economy, international and domestic travel, whether for business, leisure, educational or personal reasons, has fuelled the rise of tourism as a significant service industry. In 1996 in BC, tourism contributed $4.5 billion (current dollars) to the provincial GDP.

Yet tourism is not a traditional "industry", with a specific "tourism product". Tourism, considered to primarily consist of a diverse set of activities undertaken by domestic and international residents alike, is inherently difficult to measure. While **Tourism BC** conducts and publishes extensive surveys that directly examine visitor characteristics, activities, and expenditures, **BC STATS** *Tourism Room Revenue* report attempts to incorporate as many proxy tourism measures as possible.

While the *Tourism Room Revenue* report has undergone many changes over the years, the current version is intended to provide sufficient information to facilitate effective use by government, industry and the general public.

The following illustrates the main components and new additions to the format and content of the report.

Highlights

Room revenue *highlights* are now solely based on seasonally adjusted accommodation revenue data. Seasonal adjustment to the data removes much of the effects of regular seasonal fluctuation (summer peaks and winter troughs). The resulting data series provides an effective tool for analysis of underlying trends in revenue. *Highlights* compares revenue for the current month with the previous month for the province, the development regions and the accommodation categories. Format changes for readability bring the TRR in line with other BC STATS publications. Additions include a 'quick look' text table that portrays accommodation type aggregates and the three regions with the highest revenue growth for the month. Room revenue data is compiled from administrative files obtained from the Consumer Taxation Branch of the Ministry of Finance & Corporate Relations.

Room Revenue Trends

Provides analysis of room revenue unadjusted for seasonal variation. Analysis will concentrate on year-over-year data trends with an attempt to highlight major contributory events. Additions include a 'quick look' text table that provides current month and year-over-year changes for proxy tourism measures of room occupancy and average room charges, airport passenger traffic, Coquihalla highway traffic, BC Ferries traffic, and selected currency exchange rates.

Data sources are Pannell Kerr Forster, BC Ferries, Ministry of Transportation & Highways, YVR (Vancouver Airport), Victoria Airport Authority, and Statistics Canada.

Traveller Entries to BC

A new addition to the Tourism Room Revenue report, **Traveller Entries to BC** uses traveller entry data to analyse trends in international (American & Overseas) visitor entries monthly to Canada via BC, as well as re-entries by Canadian residents from overseas, & US overnight and same-day automobile trips. The data source is Statistics Canada.

Special Focus

A monthly detailed analysis of relevant tourism related data. Examples of past special focus report themes include: the effect of exchange rates on travel by BC residents; changes in accommodation properties and room counts; tourism GDP; and the number of tourism-related establishments in BC.

Data Tables

Unadjusted room revenue for development regions, regional districts and selected urban centres are now represented in Tables 3, 4 & 5 respectively.

New tables include: Table 6 (historical time series of unadjusted revenue data for the eight development regions); Table 7 (historical time series information on traveller entries); and Table 8 (historical time series data for passenger traffic, BC Ferries, Coquihalla Highway, and occupancy rate & average room charges).

Map 2 (regional district revenue) has been deleted.

Infoline

August 7, 1998

fax transmission information service from **BC STATS**

also on the Internet at http://www.bcstats.gov.bc.ca

BC at a glance . . .

POPULATION (thousands)	Apr 1/98	% change on one year ago
BC	3,958.7	1.4
Canada	30,488.9	1.0
GDP and INCOME		
(BC - at market prices)	1997	% change on one year ago
Gross Domestic Product (GDP) *($ millions)*	109,347	3.3
GDP *($ 1992 millions)*	98,201	2.2
GDP *($ 1992 per Capita)*	25,039	0.2
Personal Disposable Income *($ 1992 per Capita)*	16,515	-2.3
TRADE ($ millions)		
Manufacturing Shipments (seas. adj.) May	2,621	-10.4
Merchandise Exports (raw) May	1,987	-13.5
Retail Sales (seasonally adjusted) May	2,789	-1.5
CONSUMER PRICE INDEX		% change on
(all items - 1992=100)	Jun '98	one year ago
BC	110.4	0.4
Canada	108.8	1.0
LABOUR FORCE (thousands)		% change on
(seasonally adjusted)	Jul '98	one year ago
Labour Force - BC	2,040	0.6
Employed - BC	1,854	0.1
Unemployed - BC	187	5.7
		Jul '97
Unemployment Rate - BC *(percent)*	9.1	8.7
Unemployment Rate - Canada *(percent)*	8.4	9.0
INTEREST RATES (percent)	Aug 5/98	Aug 6/97
Prime Business Rate	6.50	4.75
Conventional Mortgages - 1 year	6.75	5.65
- 5 year	7.15	7.00
US/CANADA EXCHANGE RATE	Aug 5/98	Aug 6/97
(avg. noon spot rate) Cdn $	1.5160	1.3867
US $ *(reciprocal of above rate)*	0.6596	0.7211
AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS		% change on
(industrial aggregate - dollars)	May '98	one year ago
BC	618.23	-0.6
Canada	605.71	0.8

SOURCES:

Population, Gross Domestic Product, Trade, Prices, Labour Force, Earnings — Statistics Canada

Interest Rates, Exchange Rates: Bank of Canada Weekly Financial Statistics

What does **TOURISM** contribute to the BC economy? For five years (to 1996) the tourism sector grew at a faster pace than the BC economy as a whole. In 1996, tourism generated almost 5% of the provincial GDP, about two-thirds as much as the forest sector, and two-thirds more than mining and its related activities. In 1997, 235,300 British Columbians were employed in tourism-related industries.

BC STATS *Tourism Room Revenue* report is a monthly statistical look at tourism in BC. This report provides analysis of current and ongoing trends in accommodation revenues, traveller entries, and a host of other tourism related indicators, including detailed historical data tables.

Expo86 welcomed the world to BC in 1986, now **BC STATS** welcomes you to sample the most recent *Tourism Room Revenue* report in this issue of Infoline. In addition to what you see here, subscribers receive 13 pages of tables and charts in each issue.

Like what you see? Call Kris Ovens at (250) 387-0359 to subscribe.

Released this week by BC STATS

- Quarterly Regional Statistics, Qtrs 1 & 2, 1998

Next week

- Labour Force Statistics, July 1998
- Small Business Quarterly, Second Quarter 1998

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